

The Collins Mausoleum #2

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M. Wells

The Caretaker's Comments

By Joe Escobar

Welcome to the second issue of ~~The Collins Mausoleum~~. This is an exciting time to be a ~~Dark Shadows~~ fan! As of the time of this writing we have three new dramatic readings from Big Finish and the promise of more to come. It's been wonderful getting monthly doses of DS; I'm afraid I'm a bit spoiled.

These stories bring me back to the days when DS was essentially a radio show. Many fans are too young to remember when just about everything after 1795 was unavailable on video. If you wanted to enjoy "The Dream Curse", 1897, or any of the other arcs, you had to settle for the audio tapes that were circulating around fandom. The plot was surprisingly easy to follow, because it was written with housewives in mind. The lady of the house was often working while the show was on and couldn't keep her eyes glued to the screen. Occasionally reference materials like **The 1897 Concordance** had to be referred to, but on the whole, the stories fared reasonably well without the visual details.

With those days in mind, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to interview Stuart Manning about the ranges of dramatic readings and audio dramas. Many burning questions were answered in our little chat. I also reviewed two of the latest offerings. These CDs bring DS full circle for me.

I am also pleased to include work by another writer who is no newcomer to DS fan fiction, Susan Ramskill, author of the DS fan novel **Never and Again**. Her book is an adaptation of the story projection that Sam Hall published in **TV Guide**. She's a talented writer, and I hope that we are fortunate enough to receive more work from her in the future.

I round out the issue with another of my short stories, there are a few other tidbits here and there.

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An Interview with Stuart Manning

By Joe Escobar

How did you discover *Dark Shadows*?

I'd been aware of the show for several years before actually seeing it. The idea of a gothic soap opera seemed just irresistible, and it sorta burrowed into my subconscious and wouldn't let go. So, as a teenager, I first read a couple of the Paperback Library novels, then I saw the two movies on late-night television. So, by the time it came on the UK Sci-Fi Channel in 1995, I felt fully primed to love it. I'd always had always enjoyed slightly morbid, kind of gothic stories, and this was so special – soapy angst with a classical, slightly teetering quality. I really wish I'd been introduced to it when I was eight years old – as a teenager it still fascinated me deeply, but a few years younger, and I think it would have blown my world apart. I can really see what an incredible, gripping experience *Dark Shadows* must have been for its original audience.

So from there I started a fanzine, which I now realize was one of the best things I ever did with my time, as I now work full-time in the magazine industry as a result. I think my parents worried – probably quite rightly – that *Dark Shadows* was an alarming pre-occupation, but it's been a great catalyst for much of my professional life, as has *Doctor Who*. Anything that inspires you to get up and create something is a thing to be cherished. The fanzine brought me into contact with a number of the *Dark Shadows* actors, and it later transmuted into a website, which I still run, at www.collinwood.net.

Did *Dark Shadows* attract a cult following when it aired on the Sci-Fi Channel, or is it still a virtual unknown in Britain?

Bearing in mind that it was on a small cable station in its infancy, I think *Dark Shadows* performed very well. There's a small audience, but one that's remained loyal to the series and embraced it. And, as someone who really grew to love the show through those broadcasts, it's great to have brought that love full circle and be involved in an official project like this.

How did the decision to continue *Dark Shadows* as an audio series come about?

I'd been working for Big Finish Productions as a freelance designer, putting together cover art, and that brought me into contact with Gary Russell, who produced the *Doctor Who* line and was one of the unsung heroes in getting this project off the ground. Having seen what Big Finish had done with their *Doctor Who* line, I felt that the same should be done with *Dark Shadows* – it was clear to me that these were brilliant, vivid characters who deserved to continue in new stories. Darren Gross had been involved with a number of *Dark Shadows* projects and was a friend, so between us we put together a proposal, which ultimately led to me producing the line, with Darren joining us as script editor. It was no single person's decision, but it coalesced at the right time – Jim Pierson at Dan Curtis Productions was keen to license some audio dramas, and Big Finish wanted to produce a series in the US, so we were soon on track to make this happen.

What are the advantages of an audio format?

Well, speaking frankly, the opportunity to do a satisfying *Dark Shadows* reunion on television was missed. It was mooted and really was something that should have happened, but Dan Curtis

was always reluctant to let it proceed without his involvement. At this point, too many of the original cast have passed away, and the surviving members are possibly too old for a viable television project, so audio is a great home for a continuation of the show. It's comparatively cheap to produce, it's sympathetic to the actors, and there is a keen fan audience who want new stories. *Dark Shadows* always required the audience to invest in a primitive production and use their imagination to provide the spectacle and scale that the show's resources could not, and audio drama works in much the same way. With the right words and sounds, we can paint whole worlds for our characters, and celebrate the show in all its glory. It's a brilliant, potent format for audio – I think it's a very natural fit.

What are some of the challenges faced in creating an audio series? How do you overcome the hurdle of working with cast members an ocean and a continent away? For example is it feasible to have David Selby and Nancy Barrett do a dramatic reading together when the latter is based in LA and the former is in NYC?

Well, we're in the age of email, which does make things much, much easier. The full-cast audios are a bit of a marathon to organize, as you're juggling the schedules of several actors in a restricted timeframe, but the dramatic readings have proven pretty straightforward, which was one of the main motivations for pursuing those as a series. We have a regular LA-based director in Darren Gross, and our licensing liaison Jim Pierson is always a great catalyst for getting things pinned down, so we have good support from them and our recording studio, Private Island Trax.

As for piecemeal recording with actors, it's something we've done in the past and we'll be doing a certain amount of it for series two, for instance. Within reason, with good direction, you can join two performances in the edit quite seamlessly, but it's something I'd prefer didn't become commonplace. The impression I get from the actors is that they really don't enjoy it so much when in isolation, and you can lose some of the nuances of a performance if you're not careful. So, if there's a very good artistic reason, by all means, but we'll always aim to have people in the studio together first and foremost.

Ultimately, the biggest challenge will always be the scripts. Everything hinges on having a strong story, and that's the part that takes the most work. We're trying to produce stories that are true to the *Dark Shadows* characters and format, but can also stand alone and break new ground. The show is so broad and rich that it's sometimes hard to take control of it. Most *Dark Shadows* stories will boil down to three people in a room having a conversation, but it can never be *just* that. Making sure that we always have that crucial extra something is the hardest part. It's the smallest-scale epic in the world.

It's interesting that a company that specializes in *Doctor Who* is taking on *Dark Shadows*. What parallels do you see between the two shows? Is the audio series likely to pick up some listeners from *Doctor Who* Fandom?

John Ainsworth, Big Finish's marketing bod, is also a big *Dark Shadows* fan, and he's often referred to the show as the American equivalent of *Doctor Who*, which I'd agree with. Both shows were big, imaginative series, which captured the imagination of a young audience and really dug their hooks in, despite being produced on a shoestring budget. There is a proportion of the UK listeners who have picked up the CDs and enjoyed them without having seen the original

show, which is very gratifying. We always wanted these stories to have the potential to introduce *Dark Shadows* to a new audience, so it's been rewarding to see that happen.

Why did you choose to use original incidental music instead of Cobert's familiar pieces?

The music was a difficult decision. We have the rights to use Cobert's catalogue, but the tracks are in mono, with varying levels of technical quality, and we're aiming to produce high-quality stereo plays. So, there were two possible approaches - either use the archive music, and drastically scale back our sound design to match it, or go with new recordings.

Another important consideration was one of the primary limitations of audio - the lack of visuals to differentiate the stories. We're entirely reliant on sound, so there's a danger that if the music doesn't vary from disc to disc, then every story essentially sounds the same. So, going with our own music allows us to set a specific tone for each story, and our current composer Nigel Fairs is doing brilliant work at interpreting Cobert's work, with some new influences added in. It's taken a little while to refine our style and sound for *Dark Shadows*, but I'm very pleased with how the stories are sounding now.

That said, I'm very keen that Bob Cobert's music has a presence in our stories, so when I'm editing the scripts, I'm always on the lookout for places where we can slip some tracks in - it'll always have a presence, plus we have the theme music, which we had remixed into stereo.

Who is the man on the train in *The House of Despair*? Is it Adam? Gravenor?

A bit of back-story... When I wrote *House of Despair*, the person Quentin met on the train was an old woman, which tied into a longer prologue with an old woman warning about Collinwood, which was entirely excised in the end. Good stuff, but it didn't get us to the story quickly enough. We knew Robert Rodan would be playing the villain Gravenor in *The Rage Beneath*, so our director, Gary Russell, suggested we could have Robert play the role and give the series some foreshadowing. Gary pointed out, quite rightly, that the superstitious old lady was a bit of a cliché, and with Robert, the lines had a more menacing quality, which appealed. I always thought that it's a premonition rather than a literal manifestation of Gravenor – Quentin leaving the real world behind to face the darkness of Collinsport and the subconscious fear that brings.

Will the author of the book in *The Book of Temptation* be revealed? Angelique seems to know more than she's telling.

There's a little aside in series two about that, so you'll have to wait and see.

What is the significance of April 16th? That date figures into both *The Book of Temptation* and *The Rage Beneath*.

Erm, it's my birthday. It might have a greater meaning in time, but for the moment, that's the reason. Next question.

How is Barnabas sustaining himself? We've not heard of any attacks. Would Quentin stand for him killing anyone?

Initially, it's through Willie, as we heard in *House of Despair*, but beyond that we kept at arm's length from that aspect of Barnabas' story. In series two, we'll be tackling that rather more head-on, along with his relationship with Quentin. There's a temptation to make Barnabas everyone's

friend, which I think we do need to avoid, so we'll be shaking up some of his alliances and seeing where that takes us.

What can you tell us about the remaining dramatic reading and the next audio series?

At the moment, we're working on a number of projects for 2009. There's the last dramatic reading, the new four-part full-cast audios, plus two standalone special discs due later in the year. The full-cast project is long overdue, and I'm genuinely very excited with how that's going. I'm co-writing those with Eric Wallace, who's a writer for *Eureka* on the Sci-Fi channel, and recently contributed a dramatic reading script for *The Wicked and the Dead*.

The first series of audio dramas was conceived very much as standalone stories with a loose linking theme, which worked as a starting point, but from there we all agreed that the way forward was to open things out and make the stories bigger. So, for series two, we're moving to an hour-long format without episode breaks, and ending each CD on a cliffhanger. We're also aiming to make this much more consciously 'soapy' – it's much more of a community show this time round. We'll have a bigger cast, and be out-and-about in Collinsport with more characters. Right now, we're about halfway through the writing, and already I can't wait to get these stories into the studio. With the experience of the first series under our belts, I think we're geared up for a more ambitious second run, so I think it's going to be a very exciting ride for listeners.

What about the future of the ranges? As I understand it, BF has a license thru '09? Is it likely that you will pursue projects after that? Is the Depp movie likely to be a help or a hindrance?

At present – and I really should knock on wood before saying this – I don't see any reason why we shouldn't continue beyond 2009. We have a lot of support from Dan Curtis Productions and our actors, so as long as people continue to buy the CDs and enjoy them, there's an incentive to produce more stories. The movie doesn't affect us license-wise, but hopefully it will bring increased interest to the classic episodes, which can only be a good thing.

Is there any chance that we might get a dramatic reading based upon the 1991 series?

Joanna Goings and Lysette Anthony could do a great story to tie up loose ends in that series.

It's something we have talked about recently, as Big Finish have worked with Lysette a few times this year, and she's mentioned how she'd love to reprise Angelique. Creatively, I think that might be an interesting one-off project, but unfortunately it's not something covered by our license with Dan Curtis Productions, and the negotiation involved – assuming that it *would* be possible to get permission for – is simply too big an undertaking for a one-shot release. That said, I'm keen to involve actors from all areas of the *Dark Shadows* world, so I'd be disappointed if we don't make use of the talents of some of the 1991 cast at some point. One of the most personally enjoyable experiences of producing these CDs was the day I spent directing Alec Newman, who played Barnabas in the 2004 WB pilot. We had a great time recording his guest appearances from the dramatic readings, and bringing in some new voices does help to broaden the palette of stories and characters we can tackle.

On the subject of old business, how about a dramatic reading or drama based on the *Vengeance at Collinwood* script by Jamison Selby?

No plans for that, I'm afraid. Those initial scripts were very much Jamison's baby, and I think any effort to put them on CD really would really need to be guided by him.

Are there any plans to publish *Dark Shadows* books?

Tor Books has the license to produce *Dark Shadows* novels, so that's really not our territory.

How feasible would a *Night of Dark Shadows* adaptation be? It would be fantastic to get an audio version of the original uncut script.

Not at all feasible, I expect. In all honesty, I don't think it's ever been discussed, but my instinct is that it would be a rather redundant exercise. Movies are driven by visuals, and in this case, some crucial moments are conveyed visually through paintings and the like, so it's not an easy piece to adapt. Plus, with the ongoing efforts to restore the longer director's cut for release, I think any project we might undertake would just tread on its toes, which I'm loathe to do.

Why is there a lag between the release of the CD and availability of the program for download to subscribers? Is there a set timeframe for the accessibility of the files or does it vary?

The aim is to make the downloads available at the same time as the CDs, which we're gradually working towards. In the past the lag has been more than we would have liked, due to coordinating things with our web team, but hopefully this should become more streamlined in the future.

Finally, if you're a fan who has yet to listen to a *Dark Shadows* audio drama, why should you make the leap?

Honestly, I think the Big Finish CDs celebrate *Dark Shadows* in all its forms. We have brilliant actors from the original series re-creating their roles with genuine gusto, backed up by rich music and sound effects. If you're looking for an introductory title, I'd recommend either *The House of Despair*, simply because it sets up the first series of full-cast audio dramas, or if you're looking for something more standalone, try *The Ghost Watcher*, which is a romantic story for Maggie Evans set after the original series, presented in the dramatic reading two-hander format. All the titles are available on CD and download from www.bigfinish.com.



Reviews

By Joe Escobar

Scott Handcock is a relative newcomer to Dark Shadows, but once again he gets just about everything right in his second DS story for Big Finish. In his first effort “The Book of Temptation” he demonstrates a clear understanding of the characters and the lore of Collinsport. He is especially effective in the scene in which Barnabas recounts the legend of the widows to Maggie. Handcock masterfully recreates the eerie mood generated by similar scenes in the original show. He’s equally adept at generating dialog and interplay between the characters that sounds genuine and true to the original series. This should not be taken for granted, as it’s not evident in most of the professionally published novels that preceded the CDS from Big Finish.

The frame of **Skin Walkers** is set at some indeterminate time after the original series and features compelling interplay between Quentin and Angelique. Their interchanges run the gamut from the familiar bickering to touching and tender concern. David Selby and Lara Parker have waltzed back into their roles; it’s easy to forget that there was a gap of over thirty years between **Night of Dark Shadows** and the MPI audio play **Return to Collinwood**.

The flashback is set at the end of the 19th Century. Quentin has left Collinwood and is reveling in the near invulnerability granted to him courtesy of the portrait by Charles Delaware Tate. In the tradition of Dorian Grey, Quentin’s picture ages for him, absorbs his injuries, and suffers the monthly lupine transformation into the werewolf. Quentin finds himself at odds with a cult that aims to rid the world of lycanthropes. Trusting in a prophecy by the gypsy king of the Romanov clan (Johnny?), they set out to draft Quentin into their crusade. **Skin Walkers** is full of surprises. Trust nothing, as very little what it appears to be.

I only had a couple of little quibbles with the story. The werewolves in this tale are not the man-wolf variety seen on DS. These changelings become actual wolves. While this departure is true to the folklore, it’s not consistent with what we’d seen on TV. I am assuming that there are different species or varieties of werewolves in order to reconcile the discrepancy.

I also thought that Quentin's ignorance of the portrait's power made him seem a bit dense. I thought the events of 1897 made it fairly clear that he would never age, and yet he claims that he was unaware of that fact in the years immediately following his departure from Collinwood.

Despite these relatively tiny continuity gaffes, I whole heartedly recommend this CD. From start to finish, the listener is drawn in as the tension builds to a shocking and ironic climax. For fans of Quentin this is a pivotal tale that challenges the listener to redefine all preconceptions of the character.

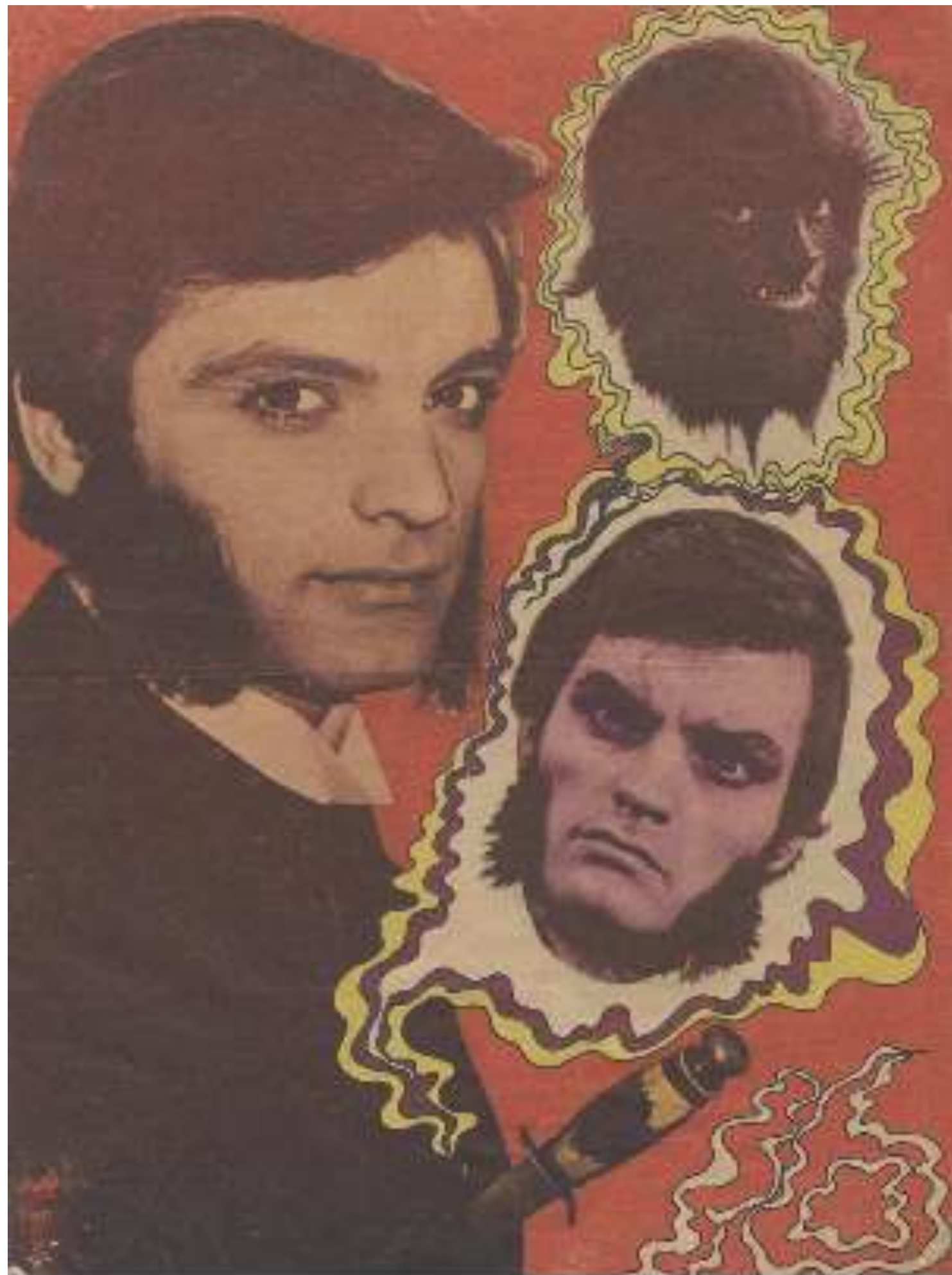
The Path of Fate is Stephen Mark Rainey's latest contribution to the **Dark Shadows** universe. The co-author of the Harper Collins novel **Dark Shadows-Dreams of the Dark** and **The Labyrinth of Souls** returns to write a haunting tale that is almost guaranteed to give goose-bumps, if not nightmares.

Once again David Selby and Lara Parker recreate their roles, but this time the spotlight is on Angelique. Attempting to keep her vow never to use her powers, Angelique retreats to a cottage on the outskirts of Collinwood. There she lives a life of relative peace that is shattered when Quentin comes calling. Yet again the great mansion is invaded by evil. Reluctantly, Angelique allows herself to be drawn into the conflict that threatens the Collins family. Another stairway through time has appeared. This one takes them to the near future where the family is no more and a malevolent force runs rampant.

The story is not new; in some respect it's similar to the arc set in the then future world of 1995 on the original series. What is fresh and novel is the truly grotesque and macabre imagery. Rainey, Parker, and Selby in concert create, through mere description, sights more horrifying than the constraints of the DS budget and network censorship would allow. What they find at the heart of that future Collinwood chilled me to the bone.

Once again though, I have a question regarding continuity. Shouldn't Angelique be dead? Yes, I know, she's been dead before, but in 1840 she died as a human! We are never told how she was resurrected. Of course her death creates a whole plethora of problems. Her demise in 1840 should mean that she never came to Collinwood in 1968 as Cassandra. It should negate all of her appearances in 1897 and the Leviathan period. If she never appeared in those eras, then their events should have drastically altered the destinies of everyone at Collinwood. Indeed, in light of all the meddling that went on in 1840, I'm surprised that Elizabeth is even there in 1970 to greet Barnabas, Julia and Stokes! I've tried numerous ways to rationalize this conundrum and all I ended up with was a headache. I finally decided that some force has a stake in preserving the timeline, and we should accept the current stories at face value.

Dark Shadows-The Path of Fate is a fascinating study of the multifaceted character Angelique. Like **Skin Walkers** it compels us to reexamine fundamental conceptions of a very familiar character and reinterpret her anew.





FOOL'S ERRAND

By Susan Ramskill

"I see you're lucid now. Good. This particular experience is somewhat wasted without your... *fullest*... attention." The man stepped back and gestured to an elaborate apparatus of glass and steel.

"Observe. The pump maintains the requisite suction. The tube fills these flasks. Once set into motion, my device will drain your blood at a slow but steady rate. You will lose consciousness in about thirty minutes, and expire shortly thereafter."

He looked extraordinarily pleased with his recitation. "Is there anything you don't understand, Doctor Hoffman?"

She shook her head to throw off the residual fog of whatever drug she'd been given. It was difficult to comprehend his bizarre words. The only response she could form was, "Why?"

"Excellent question! But surely you already know the answer. Come now. " He stepped back into the light, and Julia squinted to take in the details of his appearance. Medium height, albeit of near skeletal frame. His clothes were nondescript, an ordinary dark suit. He was profoundly bald and his head seemed overly large and out of proportion to the rest of his body. His face was familiar, and he noted the fleeting recognition in her eyes.

"Yes, Doctor, we met yesterday. Lysander Random."

"Professor Random..."

"But now that we've established my identity, you surely recall my motivation."

"You wanted... the *grimoire*," she whispered.

"Exactly. *Hadley's Grimoire*."

"But we told you --"

Professor Random sighed. "Yes, yes. You and Mr. Collins did your best to persuade me that you didn't have it."

Julia had first encountered Professor Lysander Random only the day before.

From where she sat, reading, in the drawing room of the Old House, she heard Willie raise his voice. "I just told you, he's not here. I don't know when he'll be back."

There was an inaudible response from the caller at the door.

"Come back later, or don't -- suit yourself!" Willie countered.

Julia put aside her book and stepped into the foyer to see the confrontation. Willie was trying to force the door shut against a persistent man on the step, one who looked up hopefully as she approached.

"What is it, Willie?" she asked.

"This guy wants to see Barnabas --"

"Please -- I must see Mr. Collins."

"Why?"

Willie made a gesture of capitulation and stood away from the door. The stranger seized the moment to squeeze into the foyer.

"When will Mr. Collins return? I simply *must* speak with him."

"As Willie has told you, Mr. Collins is out and we're not certain when he might return. But if you'd tell me what this is about, I'll relay it to him."

Disappointment registered in the man's features. "I see. Um, well, perhaps -- if there is no other way..." He licked his lips, seeming to search for words. "This is... *quite*... important. I have reason to believe that an ancestor of his -- a Quentin Collins -- acquired a certain book during his lifetime..."

"And you think Barnabas Collins has the book now?"

"Yes, yes. Either that he has it, or can assist me greatly in my search for it."

"And the name of this valuable book?"

He gave a nervous chuckle. "I doubt if it has value to anyone but me. In any event, it is quite nondescript in appearance. A thin volume, bound in soft, pale leather. The pages are hand-lettered script on the finest vellum."

"And the title?"

"Title? Well, yes. I suppose so." His expression became conspiratorial. "*Hadley's Grimoire*."

"*Grimoire*? What is that?"

Again that nervous laugh. "A necromancer's guidebook, you might say."

Involuntarily, Julia's eyebrows came down in a frown of surprise and confusion.

"You promise you will have Mr. Collins contact me?"

"Yes. But I must warn you that I fear his response will be negative. I've never seen such a book in his collection, nor have I ever heard him discuss it."

"Nonetheless -- you must *promise* to give him the message." He fumbled in his coat pocket and withdrew a card, on which he jotted an address. "I am staying nearby and will await his call."

"*Hadley's Grimoire*, you say?" Barnabas shook his head. "I've never seen such a book. I'm sure I would recall such a singular volume. In any event, Quentin's possessions passed to Judith upon his... er, *disappearance*... in 1897. If he ever had such a book, it would be at Collinwood."

"It isn't," Julia answered shortly. "I thought to check earlier this evening. I wasn't able to find it. Of course, I didn't check Quentin's room."

"I doubt that it is worth that much trouble." Barnabas picked up the card from the mantel. "I'll pay a call on Professor Lysander Random -- curious name! -- later this evening and tell him as much. In the meantime, I have another errand..."

"You shouldn't go out, Barnabas. Not tonight. There's been so much talk in the village."

"I have little recourse."

"No. There's another way."

He raised his eyes to hers. "Julia, you are so indomitable in spirit that you fail to recognize the limitations of others."

She returned his gaze, filled with need of her own. "All I'm saying, Barnabas, is that you don't have to go... not for *that* reason."

But he had taken her meaning. "That, my dear, is precisely why I *must* go. Because I still command my actions, can still make certain distinctions. I cherish your loyalty -- your generosity -- too much to trespass upon them."

"Barnabas--"

"Julia, *no*. The risk is always too great." He took her hands in his. "It would pain me to betray your trust, my dear -- but betray it I would, without ever intending. Even the gentlest of motives become twisted and perverted by this... *thing*... that I am. Do not insist upon a course that would be treacherous and probably tragic to us both."

Angry at having to confront this old argument, Julia abruptly broke the contact between them. She turned and went to the windows.

Did he reject her for the reason he stated, from fear of his elemental self? Or was that mere façade -- and did it matter, since, ultimately, the two were the same?

"Julia--"

Her reflection alone shone in the window before her. Even though she had her back to him, she knew that he had not moved.

"I'll return in a few hours. Will you be here?"

The implication was that he wanted to continue this conversation at that time.

Her first inclination was to deny him that opportunity, to shut him out and nurse her wounded pride. But she sighed. "Yes."

It was half past midnight when he returned. He looked relieved to find her there, seated at the secretary amid sheaves of papers.

"Well, did you meet Professor Random?" She leaned back to observe him. There ought to be some visible difference, now that he'd -- *supped*? *Dined*? This grotesque lifestyle required a whole new vocabulary.

Barnabas sat opposite her and laced his fingers. "I did. He is an unusual man. He was most reluctant to let go of the idea that I had this book, this *grimoire*, as he calls it."

But Julia was still thinking about his other nocturnal activities. She could discern no change in him. His suit was immaculate; there was no stain or crease upon his shirt. Even to her trained eye, there was no marked difference to his corporeal form: His sallow complexion was unchanged, he moved with his customary deliberate grace, his vocal inflection was normal.

How odd that there was no sign to mark the difference, to signify the staving off of real death for one more night...

She became aware of silence. Barnabas was staring at her with genuine perplexity.

"Julia, what *is* the matter?"

Flustered at having her scrutiny returned, she twisted her hands. "I'm sorry, Barnabas. It's been a long day." She tried to manufacture a suitably convincing yawn.

"Perhaps you should get some rest. This can wait."

"No, please -- go on. I'll try to be more attentive."

For several seconds he hesitated, unconvinced. Finally, he continued. "Professor Random was most persistent in his belief that this book has passed into my possession. Nothing I could say would dissuade him. And although he remained cordial throughout, I had a distinct sensation --"

"Yes?"

"Not quite danger -- not quite a threat. Discomfort, perhaps. In any case, I hope we've seen the last of him." He frowned. "Julia -- before I went out, we were discussing..."

She rose. "Let's not go into it again, Barnabas. Discussing it never seems to solve anything." She managed a wan smile. "Does it?"

He paused. "Your advice was sound, and I paid heed to it. I... forswore a call on the village. Tonight."

No wonder she couldn't detect a difference in him!

"But a visit is inevitable, isn't it?"

"You know it is. Ultimately, I cannot deny my nature."

"You aren't *safe* when the village is this upset." She drew herself up. "I am not consigning myself to some ill-conceived martyrdom for your sake, Barnabas. I'm only offering an alternative -- a temporary respite -- until the village calms."

"Julia, you have special vulnerabilities in this regard -- it would be foolish for us not to acknowledge them."

Fools we must be, then, for we never seem to...

"We're doing so now," he answered her thoughts, startling her. "I warned that you were particularly susceptible. Not because you're given to fancies, of course, but because we know each other so well. Can't you imagine how that knowledge could be perverted, how it could be made to serve my need?"

"Things wouldn't have to go that far. You wouldn't--"

"*I would* and you know it." He left his chair and moved closer to where she stood. "You, who know so well this plague I carry -- *you* know. Don't let this façade of normalcy lull you. My venom would be no less deadly for being inadvertent."

"This is ridiculous, Barnabas. You're overlooking rationality. We could establish parameters, exercise scientific *control* --"

"We're not talking about a laboratory experiment. How can I make you understand?"

He whirled and stopped only inches away. His eyes bore into hers. "Try to look away from me."

She heard his admonition and struggled to obey, but was thwarted by the relentless gaze before her. She was locked into place, unable to summon even the concentration to blink.

"Julia," he said, and his voice was oddly attenuated, as if it traveled a great distance. "Close your eyes."

Without conscious thought, her eyelids snapped shut.

"Do you understand now how easy it is to lose control?" He was standing closer now; she could feel his breath upon her face. "Brave Julia. Where is your strong will now? Where is rationality?" She felt his hands close upon her shoulders. "Can you hear your heart -- how wildly it beats?"

As if in obeisance, her pulse roared in her ears.

"How can you control this?" he whispered.

Suddenly, the air was impossibly cold and thin, and she was gasping for it.

"Julia." Barnabas' voice was near again. "Take a deep breath. And open your eyes."

She saw that she was seated in the wingback chair. *How did she?*—

Across the room, Barnabas replaced the stopper in a decanter. He returned, placing a snifter on the table nearest her. "Brandy. Drink it -- you're quite pale."

"How did I get here?"

The fire had burned low, deepening the room's shadows. He retreated to the sanctuary of those shadows. "I'm afraid I frightened you. You fainted--"

"I've never fainted in my life! Fainting happens only in Victorian novels – certainly not to me."

"As you wish." He shrugged. "In any event, I do regret having frightened you. Please have some of the brandy."

She complied and was grateful for the liquor's mellow burn.

"Julia... I think it would be best if you stayed here this evening rather than attempting to go back to Collinwood. I've kept you far too late and it is a very dark night."

"I'm fine," she protested. But when she rose, the room spun.

Barnabas made an abortive move, as if to hurry forward to her support, but then seemed to think better of it. Instead, he maintained his distance.

She felt something unspoken in the air between them, some forlorn sadness in his hesitancy and a dawning realization in her unsteadiness.

"I – I hadn't realized how tired I'd become. I accept your offer, Barnabas," she said.

"Good." He sounded relieved. "Come, let me take you to your room."

And as she accepted the arm he offered, she noticed a single drop of scarlet upon his shirt collar.

Julia slept late the next day. There was nothing unusual in that: Being a guest at the Old House, one necessarily kept the late hours of its owner. Moreover, there was little morning commotion here to prod early awakening – no shrieking teapot, no clatter of breakfast dishes, no Mrs. Johnson rapping at the door.

Julia awoke with an irrational suspicion about that odd encounter with Barnabas the previous night. That is, it *seemed* irrational now that noonday sun poured through the windows. And it *seemed* irrational when she examined herself in the mirror, paying close attention for marks or unusual bruises around her throat. But she found nothing, and that was the most *irrational* finding of all, because she almost believed that *something had happened* last night.

But had it been as Barnabas passed it off, merely a demonstration of mind control?

She wasn't satisfied with that explanation, but neither did she dare give serious thought to a growing suspicion. Had Barnabas, despite his oft-voiced misgivings, succumbed to his baser instincts? *Had he--?*

No. It was a traitorous thought, one belied by what she knew of him.

And, of course, there was no physical trace of a wound upon her.

Plus, she acknowledged that she had been in a slight hypnotic trance – perhaps some dream prompted these silly imaginings.

But the stain on his collar?

It must have been there all along. She probably just hadn't noticed it. With that she dismissed the episode and went downstairs.

Later that afternoon, having returned to Collinwood, Julia put in several hours work in the study, catching up her notes and correspondence. She eyed the envelope from Sao Paulo, with its swash of garish stamps. However dubious the lead, she must follow it up – a cure for vampirism might be found in such a place, with its legacy of jungle medicines and ancient tribal lore.

As she sealed the envelope of her response, she suddenly remembered the tea Mrs. Johnson had brought her nearly an hour earlier. It sat there, still untouched, along with the neglected remains of what should have been lunch. The sandwich had not aged well, but she popped a butter cookie into her mouth and felt the teapot. Still warm.

She poured a cup, had another cookie. The tea was bitter for having stood so long, but she sipped gamely.

“Doctor?”

“Yes, Mrs. Johnson?”

“There’s someone to see you.”

Julia looked up. “Professor Random. This is a surprise.” She gestured for him to join her near the fire. “What can I do for you?”

“I come to speak to you once more about the *grimoire*.”

“Tea? I’m afraid it’s cooled but...” He indicated he would have some and she poured a cup for him as well.

“Sugar, please. Thank you.” He stirred, silent but with the expression of a man with much on his mind.

“Well?” she prompted, hoping that her polite smile didn’t look as false as it felt.

“Yes, yes, I should come to the point. Mr. Barnabas Collins told me he didn’t know the whereabouts of the *grimoire*. But I understand that you are writing a history of the family and perhaps you have come across the book – or perhaps there is some long-neglected family archive where it may be found...”

“I am writing a history of the Collins family, that much is correct. But, I’m sorry, Professor – no. I’ve never seen anything such as you’ve described.”

“I would pay any sum...”

“I don’t have it and I don’t know where it is.”

“Ah.” He considered her reply. Finally, offering a shy smile, he added, “You must forgive my insistence. But I am quite anxious to have the book and I will do anything. *Anything*. You see, this volume – this *grimoire* – is a trove of information of the ancient arts.”

“Sort of an alchemist’s almanac?”

“Don’t mock me, Doctor. You don’t understand at all. *Hadley’s Grimoire* is the consummate compilation of sorcery. It contains the secret to the Hand of Glory -- the Hantu incantation -- sources of prognostication known but to the ancients. Bartolome Hadley compiled the *grimoire* in 1827; it is written in his own hand, and, reputedly, the peculiarly soft leather that binds it is none other than human flesh.”

“How horrifying,” she interrupted. “But it isn’t here.”

“Ah, yes.” Again, that same expression of mentally weighing something. “Tell me, as the Collins family biographer, is that portrait in the foyer the same Barnabas Collins as resides at the other house?”

She turned to follow his gaze. “His ancestor, but the resemblance is remarkable, isn’t it?”

“Quite striking.” He stirred his tea once more. “Was that Barnabas a contemporary of Quentin Collins?”

She reached for her cup. The tea was even bitterer now. “They were separated by over a century.”

“Of course. I should have known from the costume.” This seemed an ideal time for Professor Random to make his farewell, but he continued to sit there, making idle chat. “Quentin lived during the Edwardian era. He was an unusual man; I understand he was a devotee of the occult...”

“He had rather... *eclectic*... tastes, Professor – as do a great many of us, I daresay.” She swallowed the rest of her tea and hoped her dismissive tone registered.

“I have unusual interests of my own, you know.”

“Apart from your interest in necromancy?”

He gazed at her steadily. “Oh, yes. You see, one interest oftentimes supports another. For example, as an herbalist, I have knowledge of a rather obscure variety of Nightshade that makes one – albeit very briefly – quite susceptible to suggestion.”

“Really?”

“You don’t have to feign interest now, Doctor. You just drank it.”

She pulled back and stared into the empty teacup.

“Oh, don’t worry. This particular Nightshade isn’t the ‘deadly belladonna’ you’re imagining. It won’t harm you.” He watched her, seemingly bemused. “How are you feeling?”

A ripple seemed attached to her every shift of vision, so that raising her head created a sensation of persistent motion. It was as if each movement suddenly possessed a kinetic shadow, operating on a slight delay that muddled her perceptions.

Professor Random stood and reached for her forearm. “Come with me, Doctor. I promise there will be an explanation.”

Julia found herself securely bound to an overstuffed chair. Her right arm was heavily taped, but she could see a tube snaking from her arm to the maze of tubes and bottles on the table. She recognized the layout of the room as belonging to one of the Collinsport Inn’s finer suites, and he caught the look of recognition on her face.

“Oh, please don’t make a cry for help or I’ll be forced to deny you even these last few minutes of consciousness. Besides, it would be futile. No one will hear you. I am the establishment’s only guest, and I’ve seen to the sound sleep of the innkeeper.” He picked up a small brown bottle and admired it. “Yes, the innkeeper would sleep through a hurricane tonight.”

“How did I get here?”

“No sleight of hand, I assure you. I merely gave you a suggestion and you accompanied me. Your housekeeper even helped with your coat. Surely you recall?”

She shook her head.

“Ah. The Nightshade does play tricks with the cognitive functions.”

“Why are you doing this? I don’t know the whereabouts of the *grimoire*.” She strained at her bonds.

“Oh, I know. At least, I believe you now, after having had the opportunity to probe your mind, courtesy of the Nightshade extract.”

“Then, why?”

“You had another secret, didn’t you, Doctor? One that slipped out accidentally. It wasn’t much of a secret, actually. Men with that condition should take caution of mirrors – at least, greater caution than Barnabas Collins exhibited when he visited me here last night. But you confirmed it for me, as you now give me the entrée to the *grimoire*...”

“I don’t understand. He told you he didn’t have...”

“True. That is what he told me. But I have given him the opportunity to reconsider – thus, the rationale for this rather unwieldy process.” He gestured to the empty flagons. “And should he disappoint me, I can retaliate by depriving him of his confidante, the eminent Doctor Hoffman, as well as by implicating him in the rather ghoulish manner of your death.”

There was a ghastly symmetry to his plan, she shuddered to realize. *Either Barnabas produced the book for Professor Random, or she died – and her death would further inflame the suspicions of the Collinsporters.*

“Tsk. Killing comes hard to me, Doctor, I hate the *waste* of it.” Yet, in contradiction to his words, the professor flipped a switch and the apparatus began to huff. “Nonetheless, I *will* have the *grimoire*.”

She watched as the first few drops of blood – *her* blood – coursed through the tube and fell into the flask. “Barnabas will come, and if I’ve been harmed, he will kill you.” Even as she said it, she knew that posthumous retribution wouldn’t do *her* much good.

“My dear Doctor -- couldn’t you anticipate that I would not pursue this course unprotected?” Random pulled a heavy revolver from his jacket pocket. “Silver bullets, I believe, will do the job. But I hope it won’t come to that. Rather, I hope he brings the *grimoire* and that this entire episode ends on a less tragic note.” He returned the pistol to his pocket, then pushed back his sleeve and removed his wristwatch. He placed it on the table beside Julia. “There. Now you can see how much time is left.”

He padded over to a chair near the fireplace. He slipped his hand into a fold in his clothing, and Julia knew intuitively that his finger rested upon the trigger of the pistol.

Minutes passed. Despite the relentless sweep of the wristwatch’s second hand, she fixed her attention on the column of red that left her arm, gurgled inexorably through coiled tubing, and emptied into a flask. The container was now half full.

Barnabas was surely awake; it was well after dark. She tried to imagine how he would learn of her situation – perhaps a note, delivered unwittingly by Willie. And what action could Barnabas take? He’d already told her that he knew of no book such as Random described. How then could her life be ransomed back? He would have to resort to confrontation and violence, but he was unaware that Professor Random knew his secret. *Barnabas would be vulnerable.*

The thin stream of garnet blood poured into the flask. She couldn’t feel it leaving her body, but she could already sense its absence. Coldness grew in her extremities and a curious buzzing hummed in her ears.

When the first flask filled, the machine automatically switched to a second. Already a pool of red grew within it.

Fifteen minutes gone.

She didn’t doubt that Barnabas would come... but she found herself wondering whether he would come in time. Only about ten minutes separated her from unconsciousness... and then... *death.*

She shifted her eyes to where the professor sat. He was motionless in the shadows, so that she had to strain to make out his features.

At the window, glass and wood seemed suddenly to fold in upon themselves. Debris struck and put out the solitary lamp, throwing the room into darkness but for a hellish red glow from the fireplace embers. Wind blasted the gauzy curtains.

“Barnabas!” she cried through the roar. “Be careful – he’s armed with silver bullets!”

“You have but to tell me that you have brought the book, Mr. Collins, and you can enter without fear.” Random held the gun close to his body and looked anxiously around the room.

Barnabas materialized mere inches from him. “I’ve brought your wretched payment, Random” he hissed.

“Give it to me!”

Barnabas produced a small book. From across the room, Julia could see that the volume was scarcely larger than Barnabas’ own hands and that it was bound in a pale beige leather.

“Ah! Hadley’s bane!” The professor took the grimoire with an exultant grunt. “My grandfather was with Quentin Collins when this book passed into his possession, but the fool never knew how to use it properly – and he denied its use to my grandfather...”

“With just cause, I’m sure,” Barnabas returned.

Random’s eyes glittered back in response.

“*Barnabas--*”

Barnabas snapped around, remembering Julia’s dire situation. “I’ve done my part, Professor. Now attend to yours.”

“Have you forgotten I still hold the advantage, Mr. Collins?” Random waggled the heavy pistol. “I do not easily forgive the inconvenience to which you’ve subjected me – forcing me to undertake this unpalatable course of action. No – I must consider, Mr. Collins, consider whether I should reward your recalcitrance with the life of your blood slave – or whether...”

To Barnabas, the irony of Random’s florid speech was wearing thin. “Or *what?*” he growled.

“Perhaps I should leave you both to your own devices.” He looked at Julia and offered a weak smile. “Perhaps I shall but deliver you from your inevitable end at his hands.” He turned back to Barnabas. “And you – I will let justice take its course. That is, of course, if you do not wish to provoke me to end your existence right now.”

“I have no fear,” Barnabas whispered. His hand met and overtook the professor’s as he jerked to bring the pistol to play. One shot squeezed off, but Barnabas had angled the weapon’s muzzle toward the open window and the bullet zinged into the darkness outside. He forced the pistol from Random’s hand and it fell into the hearthcoals.

“*Barnabas—*”

He threw Random to the floor and went to Julia, looking warily at the steel apparatus that even now was greedily sucking her lifeblood. Such a contraption was beyond his ken. How was he to disable it? How could he restore what had been taken?

“What – what shall I do?”

She took a deep breath, trying to reason the best course. “Some light—”

Barnabas found the wall switch and turned it on. The bulb was of low wattage, but it was better than the near total darkness of the room.

A clatter came from the other direction and the professor was gone. No time to pursue him now. Barnabas looked anxiously at Julia and asked again, “What shall I do?”

Twenty five minutes gone.

The second flask had filled. There was a dull click as the third one actuated and a fine red fluid began to coat the bottom.

“My arm – get me loose and I’ll—”

Barnabas snapped the cord that bound her and pulled the tangled skein from her. They both fumbled for the tape that affixed the tube to her vein, and, wincing, she ripped it away. Barnabas pressed a handkerchief to the wound.

"Will you be all right?" he demanded.

She nodded.

"What about that?" he asked, indicating the flasks.

"Of no use to me now," she said. "Already it has begun to deteriorate. I can't take it back." Something occurred to her. "Have you--"

"No," he replied with finality. "I can't take it either. For the same reasons." He glanced at the door. "I must go after him. I can't let him live with the knowledge he possesses."

"Wait." She laid a hand on his sleeve. "Barnabas, if we were to telephone the Sheriff and let him see this --" she gestured at the dishevelment of the room, "-- if the authorities can be made to believe that Professor Random was a madman who sought to steal blood -- couldn't that be beneficial to us?"

"Possibly." He paused. "But he tried to kill you, Julia, and he knows my secret. I cannot simply let him escape."

She sighed. "I know. But bring me the phone and let me call. You won't have to stay. At least we can use this episode to deflect the town's hysteria. And I need to be seen by a doctor, perhaps be transfused."

"How will you explain this?"

"I'll think of something. I always do."

He gestured at the broken window. "You'll have to account for that. Not to mention, of course, the means of your delivery--"

"Have I ever failed to have a ready lie when circumstances required it?"

With a reluctant shake of the head, he went and returned with the phone. He watched as she dialed. "I have to go after him, you know. Is there anything more I can do for you?"

"I'm chilled to the bone." He came back with a wool blanket, which he draped about her as she spoke into the telephone. After she finished, he took the receiver from her trembling fingers. She met his eyes as he did so. "Brandy helped last night, you know."

He quickly averted his glance. "I've seen no spirits here." He went to stir the coals in the fireplace.

"It isn't important." She hunched down under the blanket, secure in the confirmation that Barnabas' eyes had given her. *He had taken her blood the night before.*

"*And are either of us the wiser for it?*" he asked, his back to her.

She was so startled she couldn't think of a proper response. Instead, she said, "You were able to find the grimoire."

"It was in Quentin's room."

"And now it is in the power of Professor Random..."

Barnabas seemed to brush off her concern. "Hardly a threat, from what we've seen tonight. The man has none of the wit and subtlety of a true sorcerer. If he had, he wouldn't have resorted to such a crude trick in order to obtain the *grimoire*."

A siren sounded outside.

"You'd better go."

He simply stood there.

"Go," she urged. "I can take care of this."

"Very well. And I shall take care of Professor Random."

Orion

By Joe Escobar

Orion had not been seen since the morning. Although the leaves had scarcely changed color, the evening chill had burrowed deep beneath the grey and onyx, curly locks through to the weary, old bones. The walls of the barn and the pile of hay into which the elderly retriever had sought shelter had proven inadequate. The early frigid weather had taken the Collins family by surprise. Had Joshua suspected that the invasion of the frost would have been so early, he'd have allowed Orion to slumber comfortably by the fireplace. He was the only nonhuman creature on the estate that was afforded access to the manor.

Unfortunately the numbing weather had absolutely no effect upon the fiery blaze that plagued his gut. He'd vomited a mixture of bile and blood during the night. "Come on boy, Mr. Joshua wants you inside." Orion nearly whimpered as he forced his taut neck muscles to maneuver his head to face Ben. The indentured servant's stern, rugged demeanor melted into pity when he comprehended the beast's suffering. "I'm sorry. We didn't know it would get this cold. Come inside. We got some food ferya." Bones cracking, Orion forced himself to his feet and began the excruciating trek to the house.

The dog's pain was immediately evident to Jeremiah. Joshua recognized his younger brother's expression and attempted a quick retreat from the drawing room hoping to avoid another tedious argument. Jeremiah would have none of it, and loudly proclaimed, "Joshua, that animal is old and sick. It's cruel to force him to carry on!"

Joshua winced at his failure to exit speedily enough. He tried to ignore the comment, but Jeremiah pursued him with a determined stride. Ben swallowed hard and his face transformed into a mask of resolve. "Sir, I found blood by..."

He never finished the sentence. "STOKES! If I want your opinion I'll give you leave to speak! Until then BE SILENT!" Ben glowered resentfully, but avoided his master's gaze. "I'm sure you have other tasks to attend to. Be off, or I'll...!"

Jeremiah rushed to Ben's rescue, interrupting, "Joshua, don't take this out on Ben". The hapless servant slunk away silently. "You do not wish to face the facts, but the reality is Orion is fifteen years old and he's ill. If you have any pity..."

"Pity? Jeremiah, even past his prime, Orion is worth ten of Ben Stokes." He sighed wearily, his countenance betraying a moment of angst. Taking note of his pain, Jeremiah regretted the implication that his brother was uncaring about the dog's suffering. Joshua Collins had many faults but cruelty to his beloved Orion had never been one of them.

Naomi and Barnabas witnessed the age old bickering impassively. While they were both solidly in agreement with Jeremiah, neither of them had the temerity to interfere. Joshua cast a meaningful glance at Barnabas, and he meekly followed his father out the door. "This is not over Joshua!"

Joshua froze in the open doorway and turned, "it is brother! I am master of this house! Now if you will excuse me, I have business to attend to in the yards." The door slammed shut, closing the argument. That was the last time any of the men on the estate had seen the tortured brute.

All able bodied men employed by Joshua Collins spread out around the massive scope of the great estate. Darkness had fallen, and the parties had returned, expecting to be given leave to abandon the search, at least for the night. Instead, torches and bread had been doled out to each man. The latter was provided at the insistence of Naomi Collins. She had tried in vain to induce her husband to accept the obvious. Orion was never coming home.

Joshua's eye's scanned the woods for any sign of his beloved retriever. Heedless of the fact that this ground had been covered already, he attempted to point the torch's light into every nook and cranny created by the plethora of trees.

Upon returning home that afternoon he'd found that his ever faithful companion had failed to greet him. Orion was as dependable as anything or anyone in his life. There were few things was confident he could depend upon. Naomi would have her afternoon sherry; unsupervised, Ben Stokes would shirk his duties; and Orion would greet him when his carriage pulled into the stables. Everyone else in his life routinely disappointed him. Barnabas was easily distracted. Jeremiah was competent but arrogant and willful. Abigail, well, she was Abigail. While he could rely upon her to be a staunch ally, her sharp tongue and abrasive manner frequently embarrassed him.

The retriever had served him well for nearly a decade and a half, well past the normal life expectancy of the animal. He exhibited the qualities Joshua valued most: loyalty, obedience, and a willingness to please. While he excelled in his hunting duties, Joshua prized him most for his companionship. If the truth was to be told, he had been barely able to discharge his other duties of late. In fact, they'd not gone out together in well over a month. That last time, he'd dropped the game twice. He'd also been so slow to return that Joshua had been forced to meet him half way. He'd excused the poor brute on account of his advanced age.

Eventually, he realized that the numbers of torches had diminished. A puzzled and angry expression clouded his countenance. He caught up with Riggs who was heading back to the house. "What is the meaning of this?! I have not indicated that the search is over!"

"Mr. Collins, begging your pardon sir...but..."

"But what? Speak up man, before I have you discharged!"

"Mr. Jeremiah, he sent us home."

Joshua was about to continue to berate beleaguered servant, but instead he held his tongue. Riggs had always been loyal and competent. Instead he controlled his voice and commanded evenly, "continue the search and do not stop until I order it. Is that understood?"

"Perfectly sir," the older man replied.

Joshua stormed off in search of his younger brother. He found him in the drawing room sipping brandy. "WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?"

"What is the meaning of what, brother? I'm having a well deserved drink."

"How dare you countermand my orders and then have the audacity to sit there drinking? Have you no decency or concern?"

"I'll have you know, I'm drinking to what I hope is the memory of a loyal and loved servant, who I hope is finally at rest."

"If you loved him you'd be out searching!"

“Joshua, we have combed the area again and again. We’ve gone farther than the scope of that poor crippled beast. If he was alive he’d be here. If dead and on the grounds, we’d have found him.”

“Perhaps he’s hurt in need of assistance!”

Joshua looked so pained that Jeremiah felt a pang of sympathy. “I doubt that very much. I think he went over the cliffs. You know his sight is not what it used to be. His faculties were failing as well. Think logically. He could not and would not have gone far. If he passed on naturally, we’d have found his corpse. He must have gone over the cliffs.”

A dangerous light crept into Joshua’s eyes. “You’ve finally ended our quarrel, haven’t you?”

“Now what is that supposed to mean?”

“I think you comprehend sir! You have persisted in the notion that Orion has outlived his usefulness and taken steps to see to it that you had your way!”

Jeremiah stood up, towering over his brother, his eyes narrowing dangerously. “Now listen to me.” He paused, forcing his voice to remain steady and even. “I will say this once. I did not have a hand in the disappearance of your dog. I know not what his fate was. My conscience is clear, but for one thing.”

“And what is that?”

“I wish I’d had the courage to do what needed to be done, in spite of your orders. Had I done the deed, I’d have been open and honest about it. I’ve never betrayed you Joshua. If you call me a liar, then I shall be forced to leave your house.”

Joshua’s mouth dropped open. Jeremiah had never spoken to him this way before. Doubt transformed his features. The younger man turned on his heel and marched out of the room before another word could be said. Although a kernel of doubt remained, Joshua was confident that Jeremiah had not been the culprit. If his brother were innocent, who else could be to blame? He doubted that Barnabas had the gumption to take such an action himself. Besides, he’d been with him all day. None of the servants would dare to do such a thing, except of course Ben Stokes. Yes, the convict Ben must be to blame.

He grabbed his riding crop and strode out to the wood pile to find the burly man lugging a load of firewood. He struck him viciously across his arms. Ben dropped the wood and glared at Joshua, his fists clenched in rage and pain. “Villain, admit that you killed my dog!” Joshua was oblivious to the barely controlled rage that threatened to explode from the massive man. Only the fear of a return prison held the convict in check.

“I didn’t do nothin’”, the desperate man replied.

“LIAR!” Joshua raised the crop again.

A hand grasped his arm from behind, wrenching the leather implement from him. He turned in shock to face his brother. “Ben had no hand in Orion’s fate. He was with me all day. You may recall that Naomi had asked me to supervise some maintenance on Seaview.” The house had been Naomi’s dowry. “She asked Ben to accompany me.”

Indecision clouded Joshua’s features. He stared at the two of them, barely resisting the urge to suggest that they had acted in collusion with each other. Knowing that such an accusation would impel Jeremiah to abandon Collinwood, Joshua kept silent. Wordlessly, he retreated to the house.

Barnabas appeared from behind the woodpile. "If either of you did the deed, I applaud you. It was necessary."

"Barnabas, had I the courage to do so, I'd have done it openly," his uncle replied. "Furthermore, I told the truth; Ben did not have an opportunity to do it. I believe it is as I said. Orion, either through failure of eyesight or mind, ventured too close to the cliffs and went over them." Barnabas nodded and accepted the answer, but was far from convinced.

Naomi sagged into her chair at her dressing table. She was drained by the ordeal of comforting her four year old daughter, Sarah. She'd been inconsolable, refusing to go to bed until Orion came home. Naomi eventually insisted she retire for the night but had sat up with her until she cried herself to sleep.

She placed an envelope in the desk, now only half full of white powder. She'd obtained it years ago, intending to mix it with some of her daily wine. Life at Collinwood had grown intolerable. With Barnabas fully grown, she'd planned to finally escape the monotony and tedium of life with Joshua Collins. Her bid for liberty had been stymied by the revelation that she was with child. She smiled wanly at the thought that the money spent on the herbal extract had not been wasted. It had purchased freedom for another.

A single tear slid down her cheek as she sipped the sherry, toasting the memory of a beloved friend.

Letters Column

From Brad Farb

I just read your original fanzine draft and the update, though only skimmed the updated "Addiction" and piece on the German connection of the Ross novels. Overall, I really enjoyed the material, and your writing about our beloved characters was impressive. "Addiction" did seem unfinished (with the reader left wanting more) --unless it was your intention to just provide a slice-of-"life" tale of Barnabas' ongoing condition.

A sequel to "Addiction is a definite possibility, but it was intended to be self contained story. Essentially I was trying to "read between the lines" and answer a question I had regarding how Barnabas was sustaining himself during the period covered by the Big Finish audio dramas.

From Jean Graham

I enjoyed reading through the zine! Really nice job, Joe. I hope it gets you subscriptions from lots of new readers, as well as from us "old guard" fans. :-D ... *(The following is in response to my request to continue her "Epitaphs" series)* No, I wouldn't mind at all if you write some more Epitaphs to carry on the tradition. This one's a great start. I'll look forward to seeing the rest. :-)

Look for another "Epitaph" next issue. Thank you for creating series and welcoming me into your domain.

From Guy Haines

Nice to hear from you. Thanks for the zine. Nice drawing of Barnabas! Are you accepting letters of comment for a letters page? Artwork? Let me know.

Letters of comment, artwork, stories, articles, etc. are eagerly accepted.

From Nicole

Hello! I am a Darks Shadows fan and I heard about your fanzine! I have a few questions. Is it a big file that u send through email? My computer is very slow and is actually getting repaired this weekend. So, I don't know how it would work out. Also would anything be sent out through regular mail?

Issue 1 was nearly 3MB. I later discovered it could have been a bit smaller. I'm trying to set a 2MB limit on future issues. I'm experimenting with other formats as well. I have a web page version that should be about 200KB, about a tenth of the size of the WORD version. The formatting is lost in that version. As of now there are no plans to distribute via snail mail. I've never been very organized when it comes to money and I don't know how regularly I'll be producing this publication. Indeed, its future is uncertain after issue 3. I'll need regular contributions to keep it going.

From Jack Kusler

I will head back to the drawing board and send you more artwork. Since the zine is being typeset in Word, have you thought about color illustrations? I am attaching a dvd case cover I did for my personal video that I took of the Collinsport Players skit from a couple of years ago. I would like to submit some of the same type artwork for the zine, if you think it will work.

Color illustrations would be great! I'd also love to run an article or two about the Collinsport Players.

Well that's about all we have space for now. We have some exciting surprises in store for next issue. Hope to see you then!

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For a complete list email
jayteevideo@yahoo.com

or send s.a.s.e to

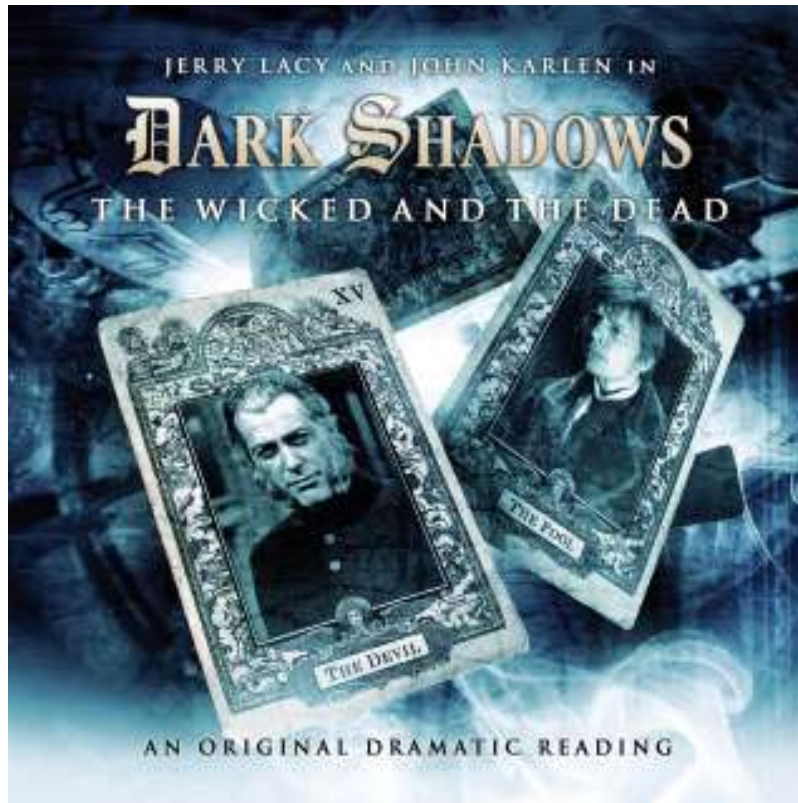
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